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Organization:

Title:

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Attention: Travis Moseley,

I would like to express my concerns and the reasons why I feel that there should not be any proposed wilderness designations in the Sacramento Ranger District within the Lincoln National Forest. I see that there are two possible locations in Alternative B selected and I feel strongly that neither of these areas would meet the wilderness characteristics that are required. With that stated, I strongly feel that all proposed wilderness designations in Alternative C cannot meet wilderness requirements and have a plethora improvements on designated areas. I also believe that it wouldn't be in the best interest of the forest lands selected for the health of the forest, economic impacts, and overall enjoyment of our public lands.

I feel that these selected areas couldn't possibly meet wilderness characteristics due to the vast amount of infrastructural improvements, roads, utilities and other man made features that should automatically disqualify these proposed areas from ever being considered wilderness. The infrastructure that was put in these areas required large wheeled equipment to put them in initially, and will also require some of this same machinery to repair and maintain that infrastructure. The water infrastructure in these areas is vital to the ranchers, cattle, and permits they serve. They are also of equal importance to the wildlife that also benefit from these man made water infrastructure facilities. Furthermore, I know for a fact that some of this water infrastructure was put in using the federal EQUIP program, which came at a large cost not only to the rancher but also federal dollars. These improvements are of great value and importance and need to be maintained properly. If these watering facilities weren't able to be maintained adequately because of Wilderness designation, it would be extremely devastating to current wildlife populations, as well as to the ranching operations that this would affect.

As we've seen in the past, such as the Little Bear Fire in Ruidoso which originated in a designated wilderness, it grew to enormous strength because of the requirements of the wilderness which limited what the firefighters could do to prevent the spread of the fire. When the fire came off of the wilderness it was out of control and devastated the surrounding community both economically and emotionally. All of this could have possibly been prevented if not for the wilderness restrictions. We do not want this to happen in our communities because of wilderness designations, therefore I am against any wilderness designations within the Sacramento Ranger District because of the possibility of it leading to the problems previously listed.

I have talked to many avid hunters and sportsmen who also believe that any proposed wilderness designation would not be beneficial to the Lincoln National Forest. They see the need for watering facilities as well as supplemental feed (E.I. salt blocks, mineral and protein tubs), and what a devastating effect it will have on the wildlife and overall general health of the forest if ranchers are unable to maintain and keep improving these federal lands. They also see that adding restrictions rarely is beneficial, and that these lands are well cared for now and anyone and everyone is able to enjoy them now just as they are.

I personally know that not only roads, miles of pipeline, tanks and water troughs lie within these proposed areas, but so does Otero County Electric Coop. electric lines. As we all know they will need to be able to maintain their lines to keep all of us in power. And any wilderness designation should limit them from being able to maintain, repair and replace any of the facilities. I also know that Penasco Valley Telephone Coop has fiber optic cable ran through these proposed areas, and any wilderness designation would also hamper their ability to maintain and improve their facilities also. Also, there are two oil well locations found within the proposed wilderness designations. Both have raised gravel roadbeds leading to them, one of which is about one mile long. Also, there is old mining evidence found on another proposed location .I don't see how these man made facilities can even

be considered in a wilderness designation, and how you can deny the fact that man has been using these areas for years. Therefore I know that any proposed wilderness designation in these areas will have to be invalid due to the heavy influence of man.

In closing, I would like to strongly urge you to consider the negative impact of having any wilderness designations in the Sacramento Ranger District and Lincoln National Forest would have on the wildlife, the small urban communities that lie within the SRD, and the ranchers and the allotment owners within the Lincoln National Forest.

Thank you for considering these comments,
Stetson Elkins